28: Spiro--87-88 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 853, 862, 826 Ifalik

"Feeding at home is, at first, like the feeding in the birth-hut, the nourishment consisting of the breast-milk and water, the latter always preceeding the former. But the water is more than water; it is 'medicine' as well. That is the water-feeder is a sack-like piece of coconut bark, in which is wrapped the leaves of the angorik, and is called walewa. The walewa is immersed in a coconut shell containing water, and when the mother feeds water to the infant she squeezes the walewa which has absorbed the water, so that the water streams into the infant's mouth. This practice often is disturbing to the baby, because the flow of water cannot be readily controlled, and I have seen many babies gagging on an overflow. Besides, if the infant is genuinely thirsty, he is frustrated by his own inability to swallow the water as rapidly as its streams into his mouth, so that he gasps and gurgles and chokes while trying to swallow. [88]

As is the practice in the birth-hut, the infant is fed whenever it cries, or whenever it turns.

The breast, then, serves not only as a source of nourishment, but as a pacifier as well. That the breast assumes the function of pacifier is indicated by the almost reflexive turn of the child to the mother's breast in time of distress. When I first made my appearance on the island, and the babies were still frightened of me, many would either clutch at the breast, or else place it in their mouths."

28: Spiro--88 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians-1-1
116, 853, 157, 862 Ifalik

"It has been claimed by many observers that in cultures in which there is no oral frustration, in which the breast is always available, that children will not suck their thumbs. The great majority of children on Ifaluk are thumb suckers, not only those who have been weaned, but those who are still being suckled. Some mothers discourage thumb-sucking, while others are unconcerned about it. Those opposed to the practice say that it weakens the thumb and kills the child's appetite.

Thumb sucking, then, is not only a function of oral frustration. It may be a simple satisfaction of the sucking reflex. Or, in older children, it may be a regression to the oral level of mastery. This would be particularly true on Ifaluk, in which the older child is, relatively speaking, neglected, so that the thumb sucking is a return to the security and emotional gratification of the nursing infant.

When the mother feeds her baby, she lifts it from its bed or cradle, returning it to its place, when she is finished. Always care is taken to support the infant's head, so that it does not fall back. At first the stiff cloth is used which prevents the head from falling. Later the cloth is discarded, but the mother supports the head with her hand. This support continues whenever the baby is held, until it begins to crawl. Again, I learned this the hard way, by violation of the practice, and being taught the correct way by the father of the infant I had 'maltreated'.

Only the mother may feed the baby during its first three months. If she should die, a wet nurse will be found, but not if her milk is scarce. In the latter case, coconut juice will be added to the diet."

28: Spiro--89
116, 854, 862

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"This crying, however, is mild, and usually lasts but a few seconds, until the infant feels the nipple in its mouth. It is the early morning washing that produces intense crying and screaming. As we have seen, the infant is first washed in the channel, at birth, by its mother's attendant. After that both the mother and her attendant together wash the infant until the end of its second month. It is washed three times a day--morning, noon and afternoon. It is the morning bath in particular that elicits the crying response, and understandably so. In the early dawn, when the infant is washed, the lagoon is extremely cold, as I can testify from personal experience. The infant is usually wakened from its sleep, taken from its overly-warm 'bed' in which it is covered with many cloths and a blanket, and is immersed completely in the water, with only its head above water. The result is always bitter crying on the infant's part, and understandably so, for this is, indeed, a traumatic experience. Either the mother or her attendant washed the infant, after which, while still standing in the water, the mother nurses it. His screaming has been dissipated by this time, and the breast seems to be very welcome. (7)"

"7. The natives are not unaware of the pain this bathing ritual inflicts on the infant. But the mothers explain it by the refrain of musuwe, musuwe."

28: Spiro--89 [2] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 853, 862, 262 Ifalik

"In its third month, the infant's diet is increased, and in a sense, this is the beginning of its weaning, though the natives do not view it as such. The mother begins to give the infant taro and fish, which she first masticates and then introduces it into the infant's mouth with her fingers. At this time, also, the infant is introduced to the palm-toddy. Only the fresh toddy that had just been collected is given to the infant, and even it is first diluted with water before it is given to the baby. If the infant does not like the solid food, it is not forced to take it, but its mother will continue to offer it these foods at frequent intervals, until it gets to like them."

(1947-48) 1949

"Weaning, as we have seen, is begun in the third month, the infant being fed some toddy and fish as part of its regular diet. As soon as it begins to crawl, breadfruit and taro are added to the diet morning, noon, and afternoon. However, the breast is still given the child even to the age of three and after that age should the child desire the breast, the mother will prevent him from suckling, shaming him, by telling him that the other children will laugh at him. Should a new birth occur, however, the child is immediately deprived of the breast, the mother claiming that they do not have enough milk for two sucklings. The advent of a new baby, then may cause decided oral frustration for the older sibling. [92]

This oral deprivation is unquestionably one source of a sibling rivalry that is apparent in all stages of the child's development. This rivalry is as apparent to the natives as it is to the ethnographer. The older sibling, the natives agree, does not like the younger. The parents tell him that the infant is his sibling and that he should love him and be kind to him. The child, so the natives claim, takes this preachment to heart, so that 'he savvy, he like.' But in reality, the problem is not so simple. It is rare that 'he savvy, he like.' The natives themselves pointed out that following the birth of an infant, the older sibling becomes 'ill.' Often he cannot eat or sleep, and then a special medicine is prepared for him. In many cases the older sibling actually strikes the infant. The natives attribute this 'sickness' of the child to the lonesomeness it had felt for its mother

during her ten day confinement in the birth-hut, which persists for a time even after her ten day confinement in the birth-hut, which persists for a time even after her return. But, they all agreed that it does not last very long, and the sibling rivalry is soon dissipated. This is not in accord with the facts, however, for it continues throughout childhood, as we shall soon see. (10)"

"10. That the natives should deny the persistence of sibling rivalry should not occasion any surprise. Until Freud, western peoples refused to 'see' this phenomenon."

28: Spiro--92
116, 862

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"At the completion of the weaning, the child eats the same food as the adults. Eating problems do occur, however, and the parents are indulgent with the child. If he does not care for the food already prepared, they will attempt to give him other food. If nothing appeals to him, he is 'sick', and medicine is prepared for him."